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Attack problem of meth from Mexico

We applauded the opening of the Mexican Consulate in St. Paul. The local Mexican population is indeed growing, for a variety of reasons, and consular services here are an asset to new immigrants and to the established community.

But now that the honorifics are done, let's get down to business. We agree with Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., that Topic No. 1 at the consulate should be the proliferation of methamphetamine labs in Mexico and increased trafficking in the drug.

"The meth epidemic, this poison polluting Minnesota, is being produced in Mexican superlabs and is trafficked by Mexican drug gangs," McCollum, a member of the House International Relations Committee, said in a press release Monday. "Banning Sudafed and eliminating every lab in Minnesota will do almost nothing if we do not stop meth at its source — Mexico."

We agree.

Despite a modicum of success in other states, we've been critical of Minnesota's jump-on-the-bandwagon efforts to pass legislation restricting the sale of cold medicines. For the record, we've long believed that the scourge of drugs is a problem of demand, not supply. All the Sudafed legislation will do is force domestic methmakers to figure out another way to make the stuff.

Which brings us back to Mexico. There's overwhelming evidence that it is increasingly the primary source for meth in the United States. Last week, Sen. Dianne Feinstein wrote to Mexican President Vicente Fox, noting her concern that Mexico is importing far more pseudoephedrine — the primary ingredient used to make meth — than it needs to treat every snuffle south of the border.

At a hearing this month, Anthony Placido, acting assistant administrator for intelligence at the Drug Enforcement Administration, said, "Perhaps the greatest emerging drug threat from Mexico is the production of methamphetamine for sale and use in the United States." He went on to say "Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat not only along the Southwest border but also to the entire United States."

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension backs this up. About 80 percent of methamphetamine in Minnesota comes from Mexico, the agency says. The DEA confirms that Mexico is the principal source of foreign-produced methamphetamine in the U.S., and that trafficking has greatly increased since 2002.

Clearly, this is ripe for discussion at both the local and federal level. We wish McCollum — and anyone else who understands the wide-ranging, damaging impact of this addictive drug — well in fostering those discussions.